

Overview of Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare with Service Projections for 2005

Effective January 1, 1998, the DHFS assumed direct responsibility for child welfare administration in Milwaukee County, as required by 1997 Wisconsin Act 27. The Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare (BMCW) is the state agency mandated in statute to investigate allegations of child abuse and neglect in Milwaukee County, to ensure the protection of children at risk of maltreatment, and to provide services to children and families. The Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare performs a public child welfare function within the Division of Children and Family Services and contracts with private agencies in order to provide many of the child welfare services in Milwaukee County.

The mission of the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare is “to promote the best interest of children by supporting and encouraging families' efforts to resolve problems which threaten the safety of their children. We remove children from their homes when they are not safe. When children cannot be reunified with their families, we will provide suitable alternatives in permanent, stable and nurturing homes.”

The safety, permanence, and well being of children are the primary focus for all programs within BMCW. Safety outcomes are designed to ensure that children are protected from abuse and neglect and are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible. Permanency and stability in their living situations are a priority, as is the preservation of family and community relationships and connections, when appropriate. Child well being focuses on ensuring that case plans and services are directed toward increasing the families' capacity to provide for their children's needs, including educational, physical and mental health needs.

BMCW consists of a public/private partnership in a decentralized case management services model delivered from five service territories. As part of this RFP process, those service territories will be reconfigured into three sites, with the boundaries redrawn to balance workload, be consistent with recognized neighborhood boundaries, and be more closely aligned where possible with W-2 region boundaries. Two of the three service territories will contain new pilot projects for improving the integration of service planning and delivery for families in need of economic and social supports and who also have open cases in the child welfare system. Applicants that successfully bid on either of those two service territories will be responsible for providing child welfare services to families served by those pilots, and for working with community residents and agencies to achieve successful child, family, and community outcomes. (See Section 1.7 of RFP - Service Territory Boundaries)

BMCW Child Welfare Programs and Service Projections:

1. **Intake and Assessment** is defined as child protection intake and initial assessment functions in response to child abuse and neglect reports and in response to child welfare referrals where a parent or child is requesting assistance with a special need. *(This work is done by state-employed staff and is not included in this RFP.)*

The Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare's centralized intake unit receives an average of approximately 1,300 reports of alleged child abuse and neglect per month. About 70% to 80%, (850 - 1,000) of the above referrals are assigned to social workers to conduct an initial assessment of the alleged abuse and neglect referral. During CY 2004, an average of 109 children per month were removed from their homes and placed in an Out-of-Home-Care placement because there was a determination that a child was unsafe and additional intervention was necessary to ensure child safety.

2. **Ongoing Case Management** is defined as family-centered assessment, case planning, service procurement, coordination and monitoring, court appearances, and other necessary

services for children in out-of-home care and children at home under court supervision, and their families. Successful Ongoing case management ensures the identification and implementation of services and evaluation of family outcomes that bring child as quickly as possible to a safe and supportive permanent home, either through reunification, placement with family, or adoption. *For a detailed description of the role of an Ongoing caseworker, please see the attached section 1.D.1. of Wisconsin's "Ongoing Services Standards and Guidelines for Child Protective Services" (See Attachment E). (These services are included in this RFP.)*

It is estimated that each service territory may provide Ongoing Case Management services to approximately 15-25 new families per month. During CY 2004, approximately 580 families entered Ongoing Services, with an estimated projection of 180-250 families per service territory in CY 2005.

3. **Safety Services** are defined as family-centered assessment and case planning, identification and implementation of services, and evaluation of family outcomes that ensure the safety of children who are determined to be safe at home, if supported by appropriate and necessary services. *A detailed description of the role of Safety Services caseworkers is the same as that of an Ongoing caseworker as described in the aforementioned "Ongoing Services Standards and Guidelines". Safety Services workers are not responsible for managing the court process or managing permanency planning. (Safety Services are included in this RFP.)*

In 2004, approximately 50 to 110 (average of 85) family referrals were transferred from Initial Assessment Social Workers to Safety Services each month. For purposes of comparing case volume, about two families are referred to Safety Services for every one family that has children in Ongoing Services. The numbers of Safety Services cases may increase based on the Department's interest in providing services to families and children who live with domestic violence, or who face risks to safety that are not imminent but are likely to be without intervention. Safety Services expansion or enhancement is dependent on the successful passage of recommended changes in the BMCW budget.

4. **Out-of-Home Care and Licensing** is defined as the recruitment, training, support and licensing of foster care families and provides the centralized function with respect to authorizing placement of children in foster homes, shelters, group homes, treatment foster care homes, and residential care centers for children and youth. *(This work is done by privately contracted staff, but is not included in this RFP.)*
5. **Adoption** is defined as the recruitment, training, support and licensing of adoptive families. *(This work is done by privately contracted staff, but is not included in this RFP.)*
6. **Families in Need of Supportive Services (FISS) program:** FISS provides assessment and intervention services for adolescents and their families to assist them in avoiding unnecessary juvenile court involvement. *(This work is done by privately contracted staff, but is not included in this RFP.)*
7. **Wisconsin Kinship Care program:** The Kinship Care program financially supports both unlicensed relative placements that are ordered by the county Children's Court, as well as relative living arrangements that are privately arranged absent Children's Court or Child Protective Services involvement. *(This work is done by privately contracted staff, but is not included in this RFP.)*